THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) As on 31st October, 2004, approximately 1,80,000 applications are pending in various Passport Offices in the country.

(b) At present, there are 30 Passport Offices in the country. The number of passport applications has increased over a period of time. The staff strength has also gone up although it is not concomitant with the increase in the number of passport applications received.

(c) Yes.

(d) the issues relate to service matters.

Trans Asian Railways

2267. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNALAFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Myanmar-India link a component of Trans Asian Railways (TAR) network, would be ready by 2005;

(b) the details of the rail routes of the TAR and time-frame within which the entire project would be completed; and

(c) the details of agreement on sharing of the cost of the project between different countries to be served by the rail route?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The feasibility study being conducted on the India-Myanmar rail link by RITES Ltd. is expected to be completed by January, 2005. Subsequent work will be undertaken after consideration of the report prepared by RITES Ltd.

(b) Three routes have been identified for examination under the Trans Asian Railways (TAR) network. The proposed Northern Corridor would link the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China and the Korean Peninsula. The proposed Southern Corridor would link Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanks and Bangladesh. A third proposed Corridor would link China, Lao PDR, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar.

Cambodia and Vietnam. The details of the proposed network, including the time-frame, are still to be considered.

(c) The proposal for a TAR network is still at a preliminary stage, and there is so far no agreement on the details, including cost-sharing.

List of terrorist submitted by India to Pakistan

2268. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that to India's list of 20 most wanted, Pakistan has replied with a list of 53 "terrorists criminals" who, it claimed, were taking refuge in India, during the Home Secretary level talks;

(b) if so, what are the latest prospects of Pakistan handling over the 20 most wanted criminals to India; and

(c) the steps, so far, taken to secure custody of these criminals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Government has, from time to time, handed over to Pakistan, a list of fugitives from India law, known to be in Pakistan with the request that they be apprehended and handed over to India. A consolidated list of 25 fugitives (including from the list of 20 handed over in December, 2001), along with a similar request, was again handed over to Pakistan during the Home Secretary level talks on the subject of "Terrorism and Drug Trafficking" held in Islamabad on August 10-11, 2004, as part of the Composite Dialogue. During the meeting, Pakistan had, obviously for propaganda purposes, handed over a list of fugitives from law who it clamed were in India.

(b) and (c) The issue of apprehension and handling over the fugitives from Indian law has been taken up regularly with Pakistan. Also, during the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries on September 4, 2004 in New Delhi, preparatory to the meeting of the Foreign Ministers on September 5-6, 2004 India's proposal for an extradition treaty was reiterated.

Pakistan has, so far, not responded positively to these requests or to the proposal for an extradition treaty.